RING loud, O bells of Easter,
Your peals through spaces ring:
With joy the fair earth greets you
Through all the notes of spring.
Ring in all peace and gladness,
Ring out all strife and tears,
As downward through the ages
You've rung the passing years.

Ring clear, O bells, your message
Throughout all nature thrills;
It all things living touches,
As when from Judah's hills
There rose the light triumphant
O'er death and mortal fears,
And dawned that first great Easter—
The Easter of the years.

Ring sweet, O bells, your lesson
Unto each heart to-day;
That all before the Master
May but life's lilies lay.
Ring soft—ring low, your chiming
May bridge some past—its tears,
For those, perchance, who mourneth
Some Easter in the years.

Again, O bells of Easter,
Ring out in thrilling peal,
That we, through all our pulses
The new-born glory feel
God's living, loving presence,
As each new spring appears
In all that breathes around us,
Throughout the march of years.
—Beatrice Harlowe, in Woman's Home Companion.

MRS. WHITAKER drew up her little brown and white pony with an expression of disgust on her face and waited until the wagon, with the long box covered with an old black shawl, had passed her on its way to the village burying ground.

"Another pauper's funeral," Mrs. Whitaker murmured, looking over her shoulder, as she drove on past the town farm.

Again Anne Whitaker's lips curled. "Old men and funerals, right next door;" and this time she struck the slow-moving pony a gentle blow with her equally slow-moving whip.

Now Mrs. Anne Whitaker was not a hard-hearted woman. She was only an indignant land owner who found her handsome farmhouse almost ruined for residential and property purposes by its proximity to the poor farm. This farm, adjoining Mrs. Whitaker's, had been left to the town last year.

"It's not that I don't want the paupers to be comfortable," said Mrs. Whitaker, as the pony trotted up the driveway toward the barn; "but I must say I don't care to have them right under my nose."

Mrs. Whitaker, not finding her man about, unharnessed the pony and led him into the stall and then went indoors to discuss with Hannah, the only other occupant of the big house, the disadvantages of the locality.

Meantime in the poorhouse, next door, a little child was sobbing her heart out in an upper room.

"You hadn't oughter have taken her away before her mother died, if she did make a fuss," said the daughter of the woman who looked after the poorfarm. "I'm agoin' up to see her."

She went up two flights of stairs to the garret room where a child was seated on an old box in the corner. The child stopped crying, half frightened as she entered. The girl sat down on a trunk opposite

"Look here, Ruth, you mustn't cry any longer," commanded the matron's daughter.

"I want my mother," sobbed the child, with new courage.

The girl hesitated a moment. "Well, you can't have your mother," she answered at last, frankly, "she's dead, and gone to Heaven."

"Oh," said the child, slowly, "you didn't tell me. Mamma said she thought she was going to die, but they didn't tell me; they just carried me away."

"Well, for gracious sakes!" cried the girl; "you took on so about her bein' sick that we had to. You ain't goin' to cry any more, are you?" she added, coaxingly.

"No, I ain't," answered the child, gravely.

"There, that's a good girl;" the matron's daughter rose and gave the dark locks an affectionate rub. "I knew you wasn't goin' to be naughty."

The girl went downstairs and left Ruth sitting very still upon the box in the corner and thinking hard, with her eyes fixed on a cobweb just across the garret.

"My mamma has died and gone to Heaven," the child meditated, solemnly. "I told her if she went up to Heaven first, the next thing she knew she'd look around and see me there. I ain't going to stay in this horrid place without her. I'm going to die myself and go and see her, right straight off. I'll put on my best nightgown, and I'll lie down in the bed and put some flowers at my head"—some kind person had placed a bouquet by her mother's bed the last time Ruth had seen her lying sick and still—"and then I'll die and go to Heaven." She rose now and, stepping to the window, peered between the dusky festoons at the blue sky, as if she expected to see the angels already descending to bear her away.

At last she went quietly down the stairs; she must find the flowers first, and to go out of doors by the back way she must pass through the kitchen. The girl was at the stove frying doughnuts, and looked up as Ruth entered.

"Hello," she said; "have a doughnut?"

These doughnuts were not for the inmates of the farm, and it was a rare honor to be offered one. For a moment Ruth forgot her errand, it was so warm and sweet. While she was eating it, standing close by the fire, the girl's mother, who was sitting in the kitchen, spoke:

"To think to-morrer should be Easter."

"I know it; I hope it'll be pleasant."

"What is Easter?" asked Ruth, timidly.

"Law sakes! what a heathen she is," cried the woman.

"Easter," said the girl, oracularly, balancing a doughnut on the end of her fork, "is the day when Christ rose from the dead, as all the dead shall rise."

Ruth, as she stood in the corner, ate her doughnut and pondered over the words.

"I guess to-morrow'll be the best day to die in," she decided, watching with hungry eyes as the girl bore the pan of doughnuts off to the matron's private larder; "that's the day the dead shall all rise."

The next morning brought Easter, a fair and glad day for many as well as for little Ruth; for was not this to be the day on which she should rise to her mother in the skies? She went out into the garden directly after breakfast to gather some flowers. After much searching Ruth discovered in a swamp far from the house, a pussy-willow bush, with the catkins clinging gray and soft to the shining brown twigs. She picked a great bunch of these and bore them home in triumph. Suddenly she remembered something; her mother's lament the night before she lost all knowledge of where she was, that she must die in the poor farm; how bad she felt about that. "I don't think mamma'd want me to die here," she murmured, with a little sob of disappointment in her voice.

It was at dusk of that Easter day

LOOKING OVER THE LITTLE WHITE FIGURE

when a little white-robed figure stole softly out of the back door of the poor house, and, creeping slowly along in the shadow, came at last to Mrs. Whitaker's back gate. Then it fairly flew up the pathway, and paused at the door. But the door was locked, and there was no key in sight. A sudden memory came to Ruth of the day when she had been to walk with the girl at the poorfarm, and the girl had taken the key from under the mat. She reached down now and felt beneath the mat. Yes, there it was. She fitted the key in the door, turned it quickly and found herself in Mrs. Whitaker's pleasant kitchen, where the fire glowed in a safe, subdued fashion, and the dining-room showed through the half-open door.

But Ruth wasted scarce a glance on these beauties. She had seen the brown and white pony go down the road some time since, and she planned to die and be done with it before the pony's owner should return.

She wiped her cold bare feet carefully on the kitchen rug; it appeared to her most fitting to die in bare feet; then, holding the big bunch of pussy-willows closely, she crept softly up the stairs to the handsome square chambers. She was awestruck with their size and grandeur, and it took her some time to decide which one was suitable for her laying out; but at last she selected Mrs. Whitaker's own bedroom. She placed the pussy-willows in a vase on the table at the head of the bed, and then she opened the window wide.

"I should think that would be big enough for the angels to get me through, if they're careful," she said, aloud; she had not seen her mother carried away in the poorfarm wagon in the long, black box.

She climbed solemnly up into the great high-posted bed, lying quietly in the center of it, her little close-cropped head against Mrs. Whitaker's spick and span shams, her small, bare feet projecting, pink-toed and chill, from the edge of her carefully drawn-down nightgown. She folded her hands across her breast, closed her eyes, just as she had seen her mother on that day, and waited—waited through the seconds that the tall hall-clock ticked solemnly from below the stairs, waited while they turned to minutes, and even to an hour; but the angels were waiting, too, the guardian angels of little Ruth.

While she waited the brown and white pony was ambling down the road, bearing Mrs. Whitaker home after the church service. She had left Hannah on the way to make a call on her family and was now alone. The peace of Easter was smiling on her lips and the joy of Easter was shining in her eyes, for Easter has always the largest meaning to those left as she, alone in the world. She drove up the driveway to the barn, lighted the lantern and unharnessed the horse—the hired man had his Sundays out; then she came to the back door. The sight of the key projecting from the lock brought another frown to her face.

"Hannah's getting careless," she said, as she stepped into the kitchen. She sat down a moment before the fire in the darkness, then rising, lighted a lamp and went slowly up the stairs to put away her bonnet and shawl.

She came into her bedroom, placed the light on her bureau and turned about toward the bed. She gave a sudden cry, not a shriek, but something between a moan and a sob and put her hand to her side. But after a still moment, she went to the bureau, picked up the lamp in a steady hand and walked gravely to the bedside, looking over the little white figure from the dark, roughened hair to the pink-toed feet. A hint of a smile came to the corners of her mouth.

Now the child opened her big black eyes, saw the faint smile and tranquilly closed them again.

Anne Whitaker frowned. Was it a trick being played upon her?

"What are you doing here?" she demanded, still holding the light and still peering down into the child's face.

Ruth opened her eyes again with a look of appeal in them. "I'm dying," she answered, calmly, and then closed her eyes.

Mrs. Whitaker jumped so that the chimney almost fell from the lamp, she hurried to the bureau, placed it there and then came back to the bed.

"Do you feel very bad?" she queried, anxiously.

A piteous frown came to the child's forehead. "Please don't 'sturb me; I want to die;" she had screwed her eyes more tightly together this time.

Mrs. Whitaker straightened up. "Oh, you do, do you?" then she bent over the bed. "Have you taken anything?" she asked, solicitously.

The child looked at her now. "No; I didn't have anything that was good enough. You can get 'most everything in Heaven, can't you?"

Anne Whitaker retreated a pace and sat down in the nearest chair. She did not answer until she realized that Ruth was still looking at her inquiringly.

"Yes, I guess so," she began, hastily. Then she felt a draft of cold air. "I guess there isn't much doubt about your dying if you lie there with that window open;" she went toward the window and closed it.

"Don't shut it; how can the angels come in?" Ruth sat up in bed and looked at her.

Anne Whitaker looked back at the thin little face and the sad, dark eyes and a lump came into her throat.

"They can come in at the door, I guess," she said; but she was not thinking of the words.

She went over to the child, who had lain down again, and touched her bare chill fee. "You're going to catch your death a-cold," she affirmed. "I'm going to put my shawl over you."

The child unfolded her hands and spread them out in appeal. "Won't you please let me die? This is such a nice house to die in."

Again Mrs. Whitaker retreated. "What—what do you want to die for?" she stammered.

"'Cause my mamma died, an' I want to go an' see her in Heaven, an' it's more joyful place than the poorhouse."

Mrs. Whitaker had always prided herself on being a woman of resource. She sat down on a chair opposite the bed and studied the little figure perplexedly. Suddenly there was a movement of the small nose, a wrinkling of the smooth eyebrows, and the next moment the still form was shaken by a convulsive sneeze.

Mrs Whitaker sprang to her feet. "There's one thing sure," she declared, impressively, "if I let you lie there that way I might as well be a murderer and done with it. Wanting to die, indeed! Don't you know the Lord's got work for you in the world, and it isn't right for you to die?"

Her voice rose in her indignation louder than she knew, from the clothespress where she was extracting her biggest and warmest gray shawl. When she turned again toward the bed, two great tears were stealing from beneath Ruth's dark lashes and making slow way down her hollow cheeks. Mrs. Whitaker groaned and choked and sat down with the shawl in her arms. Then, what seemed like a brilliant inspiration came to her.

"I've got some apple tarts downstairs; they're brown an' crispy, and there's one that's just about big enough for a little girl. I should think she'd like to have something to eat before she dies."

The child's mouth moved convulsively at the corners, but this time it was not with grief.

"And I've got a cooky that's round, with sugar on the top and a hole in the middle." Mrs. Whitaker smiled broadly as Ruth sat up.

"And could I take one to mamma, too?" she asked.

"Oh," answered the triumphant lady, "your mamma has everything she wants in Heaven."

The child smiled. "Then I guess I'll wait till I get there, too," she said, and lay down again.

The shawl twitched in Anne Whitaker's hands; she longed to gather the forlorn little figure into her arms, but she did not feel that she could use force toward the child; she must manage her, she had always been so good a manager.

"Do you know what day it is?" she asked, presently, feeling her way carefully.

"Yes, that's why I died to-day," was the answer, still with tight-shut eyes.

"To-day is the day that Christ rose from the dead to teach us that as He rose, so shall we all rise," began Mrs. Whitaker, gently.

Ruth was looking at her now. "But I can't rise," she said, plaintively; "'cause you keep 'sturbing me."

"You might"—Anne Whitaker drew a long breath, was it sacrilegious?—"you might play you had been dead and"—she paused.

A gleam of interest shone in Ruth's face. "But this isn't Heaven," she protested.

"The Kingdom of Heaven is within you," Mrs. Whitaker quoted, with both freedom and truth, as she approached the bed with outspread shawl. "It isn't Heaven, but we might be good and make it seem like Heaven."

The child put up her hand as if to ward off the shawl.

"But God isn't here and mamma isn't here."

"God is everywhere," answered Mrs. Whitaker; and Ruth looked about half startled. "But He is a spirit, and you can't see Him." She dropped the shawl over the child now, and as she wrapped it about her she finished more softly: "Your mamma isn't here, but you might play for a little while that I was your other mother."

"Not my real mother?" Ruth asked, wistfully.

"Oh no," Mrs. Whitaker said, hastily; "only a play mother."

The child said no more, but let herself be wound up in the shawl and sat quietly on the edge of the bed while Mrs. Whitaker brought out a pair of her long woolen stockings and drew them over the little, unresisting feet. There was still a slight disappointment in Ruth's face when the great, gray shawl was fastened with a safety pin firmly beneath her chin.

"Now be careful when you go downstairs and keep tight hold of the banisters;" and Mrs. Whitaker came a step behind with a firm clutch on the small, gray-shawled shoulder.

She placed the child in the great rocking chair in front of the stove and laid out all her goodies on the table; apple tarts and cookies and preserves and cold meat and bread and butter and rich, warm milk. Then she went upstairs and brought down an old sacque of her own that Ruth might put on, and so have her arms free; and they both actually fell to laughing as she rolled and rolled and rolled up the long hanging sleeves.

Mrs. Whitaker was amazed and fearful when she saw Ruth eat; the little girl, whose mind seemed fixed on heavenly things, had a hearty appetite. At last, for fear the child might, indeed, die from overeating, her hostess suggested that they rock together in the chair before the fire.

At this moment little Ruth looked up with a smile on her face, from which all traces of disappointment were fast vanishing. "I think this must be almost as nice as Heaven; just but for mamma."

Mrs. Whitaker smiled grimly. "I guess Heaven is a good deal within us, even with the poorhouse next door."

Hannah made an unusually long call on her family, so Mrs. Whitaker thought, holding the little, shawl-wrapped figure in front of the dining-room fire. But when at last she entered, her mistress' commands were ready.

"Hanna, you go over to the poor farm and tell them that Ruth's over here and going to stay, and I'll send John for her things in the morning."

Hannah stood still, gaping, in the dining-room doorway. "Well, I never!" she announced, with her usual freedom; "what on earth have you been doin'?"

Anne Whitaker smiled with her lips against Ruth's dark locks. "Well," she said, slowly, "we've been having a resurrection. You see, this little girl came over here to"—she was about to add "to die," but changed it suddenly "to live."—Frances Bent Dillingham in N. Y. Independent.